

SUBMISSION - SOUTH OTAGO PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

TO: Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

SUBMISSION ON: Suite of proposed changes to the Essential Skills visa (Discussion Document)

FROM: South Otago Principals' Association

DATE: 21 May 2017

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SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYMENT On SUITE OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ESSENTIAL SKILLS VISA - DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

With regard to the proposed changes in the essential skills visa there is a significant flow on effect for other businesses and in our case the education sector.

South Otago Principals' Association does not support the proposal to require the children of migrant workers to become international students and therefore fee paying students in New Zealand.

In the past, there has been a significant transient community in rural areas where New Zealand families have moved into dairy farming positions and then promptly moved on as the work and lifestyle associated with the dairy industry in particular is not what was expected. The effect for children caught up in this cycle is significant. The continuity of their education is impacted and the friendships and associations which they make within a community are temporary.

Rural communities in New Zealand have been under pressure and have been in decline for a number of years and this is, without visa changes, set to increase in the next 30 years.

(<http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/national/325489/regions-must-face-cha-llenge-of-population-decline-report>) Under the current visa system we have migrant families who join our rural communities and contribute to its wealth and prosperity. They provide stability to our communities under threat of decline. We have an increasingly urbanised population with many of our working population able to pick and choose work which suits their lifestyle and family. The dairy industry is known to be hard physical work with long and often anti-social hours. Recruiting from urban areas into the dairy industry is going to be close to impossible.

Across our schools changes to the visa rules would remove a significant number of students which would result in New Zealand teachers losing their jobs. Schools will receive less funds to operate, impacting on further job security for teachers and support staff. It would also rob the school community of essential cultural diversity. We believe the contribution that these migrants make to our rural communities is vital.

In the event that both parents of a child were able to secure employment this would be insufficient to cover the cost of 'International Student Tuition Fees' in the educational setting. This could potentially lead to children being left with extended family in the parents' home country.

For many small primary schools the compliance to host international students is too burdensome to contemplate as a viable option. Yet currently they are able to provide these educational services as though the child were a 'domestic' student.

Our migrant families already face significant dilemmas. Each year some of our migrants finish high school with excellent qualifications but the door to tertiary study is closed as they are then treated as international students with the corresponding high fees expected. These young people are then faced with the prospect of returning to their 'home country' which may be alien to them and not provide suitable educational opportunities.

Surely, at a time when we have a skills' shortage in New Zealand we should be encouraging these migrants who are excellent contributors to our nation's economic growth to settle. We have invested so much in the children and in return they have repaid us with their good work ethic and their desire to succeed as members of our community.

In conclusion the proposed changes to the visa rules would be damaging to our communities and short-sighted at best by the government.

South Otago Principals' Association